



**TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION  
RECREATION EDUCATIONAL SERVICES DIVISION  
PARKS AND RECREATION BENCHMARKING PROGRAM**

**BENCHMARKING STANDARDS  
COMPLIANCE/RESOURCE GUIDE**

<b>Level: Tier I Status</b>
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**A city, town, or county can be classified as Tier I provided they establish and achieve the first eight of the following thirteen items. Please attach a half page overview/narrative for each standard, along with attachments.**

**Listed below each standard, you will find an Explanation of that standard along with Suggested Evidence of Compliance, which outlines specific documentation/examples that must be attached with this report.**

**1. Legal Authority, Role and Responsibility.**

- a. The source of authority of and powers for the public recreation and park managing authority shall be clearly set forth by legal document.
- b. Through written guidelines and legal document such as an Ordinance, City or County Charter or otherwise.

**Explanation:** Legal documentation of the source of authority for the parks and recreation program. (i.e. TCA 11-21-102 & 11-24-104).

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Local governing body resolution or ordinance establishing the parks and recreation structure, enabling laws, and charter. Provide charter or ordinance; city/county organizational charts documenting the function of parks and recreation within the government entity.

- 2. The organizational structure must include the development of a Parks and Recreation Board (an advisory or policy board primarily made up of citizen representatives is recommended, but elected official(s) may serve as a liaison from the City Council or County Commission to the advisory board and as a voting member of the policy board).**

- a. Develops Board Operating Procedures (By-laws). To include membership, length of terms, composition, voting rights, meeting times, etc.)
- b. Develops sound Policies and Procedures for park areas, facilities, and programs.
- c. Develop Departmental mission statement.
- d. Develops or assists in developing and/or maintaining park facilities, program/event development to include a variety of activities for a variety of citizens.

**Explanation:** An Advisory Board that serves the community, usually appointed by the Mayor and/or city council with representation from all sectors of the community; the advisory board participates in many aspects of the recreation delivery system; policy boards may exist in joint recreation systems, or when a government transfers authority for the provision of parks and recreation programs to a board. These boards manage their own budget, policies, etc.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide a list of boards/membership; community diversity; duties and responsibilities; copies of policies and procedures adopted by the board; copy of department's or governing body's mission statement.

**3. Recognizes a Director of Parks and Recreation, either as a volunteer or paid part-time/full-time, to assist the board in the above duties.**

- a. This "Director" is most likely the only staff person and in many cases out sources much of the programming to other organizations or associations. The Director acts as a facilitator for much of these functions or endeavors.

**Explanation:** How are programs being delivered in your community – who is the professional or coordinator serving in that lead role?

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Organizational chart of the department or functions of the Director within the city; provide job description or job plan for the Director position; describe whether full-time or part-time or volunteer.

**4. Has established partnerships by:**

- a. Recognizing and understanding the roles of counterpart and complementary agencies in the community.
- b. Good liaison can result in more productive efforts, including greater cost effectiveness and efficiency in accomplishing the mission.

**Explanation:** Effective relationships and partnerships are the first steps to improving cooperation. Keeping lines of communication open helps your agency establish new programs and meets its goals.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Document who you are partnering with in your community. Provide examples of cooperative efforts or agreements and illustrate the impact of good working relationships.

**5. Planning must include written goals and objectives for the department.**

- a. These accomplish the department's mission and are updated annually.
- b. Goals and objectives must also address future organization and development and focus on plans for growth.

**Explanation:** A sound mission statement declares the agency's purpose or reason for existence, is adopted by the governing body and understood by all staff, boards, and the public. The mission of the agency guides the development of annual goals and objectives or plans.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide a copy of a written mission statement, written goals and objectives for the department/agency.

**6. Recreation Programs, Services and Events provided shall be based on:**

- a. Department philosophy and goals.
- b. Community opportunities.
- c. Constituency needs.
- d. Program development should involve the citizens/participants.
- e. Services are most likely delivered through other organizations/associations or cooperative means.

**Explanation:** The Recreation Program is also defined as the total services of your parks and recreation department including essential program elements such as community centers and playgrounds, programs for seniors, programs for special populations, cultural arts, and other special areas. Program services can be administrative, financing, areas and facilities, activity selection, literature, etc.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Department's program philosophy, needs assessment done in the community, current year recreation program plans. Provide citizen input results from other methods such as community meetings; other organizations that provide recreation programs in your community.

**7. Marketing, Public Relations and Customer Service**

- a. The Department should have some type of marketing component to ensure that the targeted public is receiving information concerning the Department's activities, mission and objectives.

**Explanation:** It is imperative that a park and recreation agency has the support of its community. The effectiveness and success of programs depend on their involvement.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide a marketing plan or public information plan to show how you distribute information to the media and describe the relationship with media in your community. Provide a written statement.

## **8. Resource Management and Land Use Planning**

- a. Overall comprehensive planning must include a master site plan for areas and facilities that document citizen involvement in the planning process to best meet their needs and gain their support.

**Explanation:** The agency must demonstrate knowledge of the interrelationship between leisure behavior and the natural environment, and the understanding of the principles and practices basic to the effective management of recreation users in natural resources settings.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide a copy of procedures for land management and protection issues; copy of the master site plan(s); land use plan.

## **9. Facility Use Management**

- a. A completed written land development policy and procedures for development of park and recreation lands and facilities within the financial framework of the department/city.
- b. What city personnel and/or volunteer organizations are dedicated to maintenance of park facilities at an established standard.

**Explanation:** The department should illustrate their understanding of and the ability to implement principles and procedures related to operation and care of resources, areas, and facilities.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide written policies; description of maintenance and management plan; job descriptions for positions, etc.

## **10. Fiscal Policy**

- a. Fiscal policies setting guidelines for management and control of revenues, expenditures, and investments are set forth clearly in writing, and established with legal authority.
- b. An approved fee schedule indicating the type of services requiring fees and charges and the basis for establishing the amount of such fees and charges.

**Explanation:** The policy of the agency must comply with the governing body and be based on appropriate enabling legislation. Policies should cover management of revenues, fees and charges, and discuss functions of programs/facilities.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide a copy of fiscal policy and legal authority; copy of current fees and charges policies.

## **11. Budgeting**

- a. There are annual operating and capital improvement budgets, including both revenue and expenditures.

**Explanation:** Operating budgets cover a one-year fiscal year period and capital improvements may extend several years with annual review by the administration.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide a copy of the annual operating and capital improvements budgets.

## **12. Risk Management**

- a. There is a policy for risk management, which is approved by the Department's policy entity.
- b. There must be an employee or designee with risk management responsibility and authority to carry out the policies established for risk management.

**Explanation:** Whether the risk management function is within the department, or another department within the agency – the parks and recreation staff should have input into the overall plan and its implementation. A person assigned as the department's risk manager to take responsibility for implementing and evaluating risk management policies, or someone with similar responsibility from the local government.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide risk management policy, job description for risk management responsibility.

## **13. Safety and Security**

- a. Partnerships with local law enforcement agencies (city/county) for general patrol to include basic safety and security for park and recreation sites and facilities.
- b. A general security plan developed and enacted for both general use of outdoor areas and facilities, and for specific group program/activity functions.

**Explanation:** Basic safety and security functions are important to the quality operation of a park and recreation system, and the department personnel should be knowledgeable regarding such functions. The role of the department must be identified and understood.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide copy of policy and or charts that show arrangement between department and local law enforcement personnel for basic safety and security methods; copy of plan and procedures for programs/facilities.

### **Incentives:**

- Eligible to receive prestigious Governor's Award for Tier I community/Department.
- Eligible to receive bonus points on upcoming grant application.